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RECENT MEMOIRS OF THE FRENCH DIRECTORY

Mémoires de Larevellière-Lépeaux, membre du Directoire de la République Française et de l'Institut National, publiés par son fils, sur le manuscrit autographe de l'auteur, et suivis des pièces justificatives et de correspondances inédites. 3 vols. (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie. 1895.)

Memoirs of Barras, Member of the Directorate, edited, with a general introduction, prefaces, and appendices, by George Duruy. 4 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers. 1895-1896.)

Mémoires du général baron Thiébault, publiés sous les auspices de sa fille Mlle. Claire Thiébault, d'après le manuscrit original, par Fernand Calmettes. Vol. II. 1795-1799. (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie. 1894.)

Mémoires du général baron Roch Godart (1792-1815), publiés par J. B. Antoine. (Paris: E. Flammarion. 1895.)

STUDENTS of modern history, and more particularly students of the modern history of France, have been for years anxiously awaiting the publication of the memoirs of the two men who played the most conspicuous part in the phase of revolutionary history which lies between the government of the National Convention and the restoration of order in France during the Consulate. The period of the Directory has hitherto been strangely neglected by historians. Although histories of the French Revolution and histories of the government of Napoleon abound, the only reputable work devoted to a narrative of the history of France during the government of the Executive Directory is the old-fashioned and commonplace *Histoire du Directoire* by M. de Barante. This neglect is in part due to the fact that writers upon the history of the French Revolution seem to have exhausted their energy by the time they have told the tale of the Reign of Terror, and their accounts of the period of the Directory, and even of the period of the Thermidorian government which succeeded the fall of Robespierre and preceded the election of the first Directors, generally read like spiritless and tiresome sequels to their earlier chapters. This attitude is natural enough. The period of the Directory, like the period of

the Thermidorian government, comes as an anticlimax to the dramatic events of the Reign of Terror; hecatombs of victims were no longer slaughtered upon the guillotine or drowned in the Loire, and there is a conspicuous absence of the thrilling incidents and exciting events of the earlier period. But if historians of the French Revolution have neglected the period of the Directory, it has been handled still more unfairly by historians of the Consulate and the Empire. To biographers of Napoleon, and all historians of the Consulate and the Empire have hitherto been biographers of Napoleon, the period of the government of the Directory affords simply a background whereby to illustrate the appearance of their hero upon the stage. To them the campaign of 1796 in Italy and the expedition to Egypt are the chief events of the period, and the members of the Executive Directory of France are regarded as the fortunate mortals who employed the victorious general, or as the malignant enemies who thwarted his immediate accession to supreme power. The period of the government of the Directory is a transition period, and has suffered the fate of all transition periods in being neglected by historians, but the reluctance hitherto shown in dealing with it has in part been due to the absence of authentic material upon which to work. Upon the history of the early years of the French Revolution, and above all on the Reign of Terror, historical societies and individual students, liberally aided by the French government, have recently published, and are publishing, a bewildering wealth of documents, while for the period of the Directory interest has been so entirely concentrated upon military events, and particularly upon the achievements of Napoleon, that it is exceedingly difficult to form a correct idea of the political history of France during the four years which elapsed between the installation of the first Directors on 13 Brumaire, Year IV. (November 4, 1795), and the *coup d'état* of 18 Brumaire, Year VIII. (November 9, 1799), when Napoleon Bonaparte put an end to the Constitution of the Year III.

It is not only lack of documents which has restrained students from working upon the history of the Directory; there has also been hitherto a remarkable scarcity of personal memoirs, those human documents which vivify and correct and interpret official records. Whole libraries can be collected of memoirs dealing with the first six years of the French Revolution, memoirs written by leading actors and subaltern agents alike, which contrast both in quantity and quality with the sparse personal narratives of the succeeding period. But during the last twelve months something has been done to redress this inequality; for in rapid sequence

have been published the memoirs of the two men who played the longest and most conspicuous parts in the history of the Directory. The executive authority in France was entrusted during the four years of the directorial system of government to thirteen men who held office for periods varying from a few months to four years. The one man who was a member of the Executive Directory throughout the whole four years from November, 1795, to November, 1799, was Paul Barras. The Director who held office for the next longest period, from November, 1795, to June, 1799, was La Revellière-Lépeaux. These two men survived not only the Revolution but the Empire, and in their old age, when France had again passed under the sway of the Bourbons, they busied themselves in writing down for the use of posterity the recollections of their days of political greatness. It has been known to historians for more than sixty years that the memoirs of Barras and of La Revellière-Lépeaux were in existence; they had been placed in the hands of eminent historians to assist them in their work; extracts from them had been published from time to time; and further excuse for the neglect with which the period of the Directory has been treated is to be found in the fact that no writer felt justified in undertaking an exhaustive work before memoirs of such obvious importance had been published in their entirety.

The value of memoirs as historical evidence depends upon a careful examination of the circumstances under which they were written and a thorough knowledge of the characters and motives of the writers. Now the memoirs of Barras and of La Revellière-Lépeaux were written after 1820, when the writers were both old men, and more than twenty years after they had been entirely excluded from political power. Barras was forty-four years old and La Revellière-Lépeaux forty-six, when the government of the Directory came to an end, and they were both therefore well past sixty when they undertook to place on record the recollections of their political life. This fact of itself deprives their testimony of any direct documentary value. Although both of them consulted memoranda made at the time in writing their records, their statements of fact cannot stand if contradicted by direct evidence from contemporary sources or even if unsupported by such direct evidence. It is not, however, for direct evidence as to facts that personal memoirs are consulted or followed, although only too many unscientific historians neglect this wholesome rule. The memory of an old man is proverbially treacherous, and even when edited by the use of authentic documents may easily go astray. But although affording no valid evidence as to facts, personal

memoirs, like those of the two Directors, have an immense though indirect value in affording clues to the causes of events; in recalling details the importance of which has become obscured from neglect at the time or incorrect presentation in contemporary documents; in recording impressions made at the time in their true proportions; and in throwing light upon the character of the author. In all these respects the memoirs of Barras and of La Revellière-Lépeaux fully justify expectation. It is true that, in spite of the unchivalrous treatment of Josephine by Barras, the general reading public has expressed itself as disappointed at the absence of piquant and scandalous stories, but historical students should be grateful for the fulness of the memoirs in question from the points of view just mentioned. The day has gone by for the compilation of history from a comparison of personal memoirs, but the day has not arrived and never will arrive when the value of memoirs as illustrative material can be neglected.

Before, however, attaching to memoirs even the secondary value of illustration, which is now recognized as their principal use as a source of historical knowledge, it is necessary to be sure that the memoirs in question are the genuine work of their authors, and have not been garbled by unscrupulous editors or by friends and relatives, more solicitous for the writer's credit than for historical truth. Few periods in history are so widely and so variously illustrated by personal memoirs as that of France from 1789 to 1815. Yet a large proportion of these memoirs have a suspicious origin. Not to mention lying compilations like the so-called memoirs of Fouché, or the spurious memoirs of Robespierre, there are only too many instances in which the original manuscript has disappeared like that of the memoirs of Talleyrand, published by the Duc de Broglie three years ago, or in which there was no original manuscript, since the so-called memoirs were drawn up from notes of conversations, as in the case of the volumes bearing the name of the *Memoirs of René Levasseur*, called *Levasseur of the Sarthe*. The spread of knowledge as to the duty of an editor to publish the very words of the manuscript before him has, since the expansion of scientific historical study, been so great, that historical students nowadays expect and generally receive a minute and detailed account of the condition and history of the manuscript of any newly published collection of memoirs. That is at least the case with regard to the memoirs of the two Directors, Barras and La Revellière-Lépeaux. M. George Duruy, in particular, deserves the very greatest praise for publishing textually the memoirs of Barras; for he himself is an enthusiastic admirer of the Emperor Napoleon

and points out in his introduction what he considers to be the untrustworthy malignity of the Director Barras. "This venom," he says, "I give to the public without fear or remorse, for I have affixed a warning label to the poison." It was well known among his contemporaries that Barras had spent the last years of his long life in writing his memoirs, and as early as 1825 the government of the Restoration issued orders for placing all the papers of Barras under seal. On January 30, 1829, the day after the ex-Director's death, an attempt was made under this order to seize his papers, but, fortunately for history, a few hours before the arrival of the officers of law his widow had sent the precious manuscripts for safe-keeping to M. Alexandre Rousselin de Saint-Albin, to whom they had been bequeathed to be edited for publication. By 1832 the latter had completed an edition of the memoirs ready for the press. M. de Saint-Albin had himself as a young man played a part in the history of the Revolution. He had been imprisoned during the Reign of Terror as a partisan of Danton, and he therefore admired Barras as the leading actor in the Revolution of Thermidor which brought Robespierre to the guillotine; he was the friend and biographer of Hoche and therefore detested Bonaparte, the successful rival of that brilliant general; he was a convinced republican and hated the imperial despot who had absorbed the Revolution and used the Revolutionary army for the satisfaction of his own ambitions. No more suitable editor could have been found, and it was a labor of love for M. Alexandre de Saint-Albin to turn the fragmentary notes and illiterate manuscript of Barras into readable French prose. But when his work was done, M. Alexandre de Saint-Albin was informed by the lawyer he consulted on the subject, that the memoirs of the old Director "constituted a nestful of libel suits." The manuscript was therefore withheld from publication, and in 1847, upon the death of the original legatee, it passed into the possession of his son, M. Hortensius de Saint-Albin. This gentleman held the office of a judge of the court of appeal during the Second Empire, and obvious motives of prudence prevented him from publishing during the reign of Napoleon III. the violent and malignant language used by Barras about Napoleon I. The second Saint-Albin died in 1877, and the famous memoirs passed through the hands of various members of the family till they reached those of M. Duruy. It has been said that M. Alexandre de Saint-Albin rewrote the memoirs of Barras. This was made necessary by the fragmentary condition and illiterate text of the original. But fortunately M. de Saint-Albin carefully preserved the original which he had revised

and edited, and M. Duruy has given in parallel columns some typical passages showing the nature of the editorial work done. Had this been the case with regard to the memoirs of Talleyrand, had M. de Bacourt preserved the original upon which he worked, the suspicions which now exist that the memoirs of Talleyrand are but a garbled version of the original work of the famous diplomatist could not have arisen. The story of the memoirs of La Revellière-Lépeaux is less complicated. The high priest of the Theophilanthropists was far better educated than the Provençal nobleman, and his manuscript did not need to be rewritten. La Revellière-Lépeaux, at his death in 1824, left the manuscript of his memoirs to his only son, M. Ossian La Revellière-Lépeaux. For political reasons, although he never held office like the younger Saint-Albin, the ex-Director's son adjourned the publication of his father's memoirs. They were printed, however, in 1873, though not published, and since that time the copy deposited according to law in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris has been constantly consulted by students of the history of the French Revolution. M. Ossian La Revellière-Lépeaux not only refused to publish his father's memoirs himself, but directed that they should not be given to the public until after the death of his wife. This event occurred in 1891, but the owner of the copyright, M. Robert David d'Angers, the grandson of the Director's only daughter, did not feel justified in publishing his great-grandfather's memoirs, which contained many imputations on the character of the first Carnot, while the third Carnot was honorably directing the government of France. The murder of President Sadi Carnot, however, removed the cause of these generous scruples, and so it happened that in 1895, just one hundred years after Barras and La Revellière-Lépeaux entered upon the most important epoch of their political lives, their memoirs were at last given to the world.

It might have been expected that the memoirs of La Revellière-Lépeaux and Barras should be in the main apologies for their political careers, and in particular for their political actions during the time that they sat as colleagues in the Executive Directory. Both were keenly conscious that the government of the Directory had never been popular, and that it was the fashion in their latter days to decry the Directors as greedy and insolent politicians, whose system was not marked by the patriotic fervor of the statesmen of the Convention nor by the triumphs abroad and restoration of order at home which marked the rule of Napoleon as First Consul and as Emperor. The fact that their memoirs were written as apologies for their past actions naturally vitiates their trust-

worthiness. Although, since they were at the head of affairs, they must have known more about the forgotten causes of events than outside observers, they are more concerned with defending their reputations than desirous of narrating their motives and their actions. Both indeed made use of documents that they had preserved, and endeavored to assist their recollections by references to them. La Revellière-Lépeaux does not seem to have kept any regular diary or to have preserved any memoranda of the discussions which took place at the meetings of the Directory. But he preserved a number of letters written to him during his tenure of office, chiefly from agents of the Directory in Italy, which he directed should be published with various speeches and political articles as *pièces justificatives* with his memoirs. The third volume of the *Mémoires* consists entirely of these documents. Among them should be noted, for the use of students of American history, a memoir on the relations of the United States with the government of the Directory, written by M. Rozier, the French consul-general at New York, and dated 7 Nivôse, Year VII. (December 27, 1798). The memoir fills but eight and a half pages of print and is worthy of attention as containing a French view of American politics at an interesting epoch. Far more valuable than the *pièces justificatives* of La Revellière-Lépeaux are the records kept by Barras of the debates in the Directory, which are incorporated in his memoirs. The publishers have had the happy thought of printing these contemporary notes in a different type from the body of the memoirs. For the purposes of the historian, they are worth all the scandalous gossip of the former Director's faithless memory many times over. No one except an inveterate scandal-hunter will care to read twice the malicious insinuations of the old *roué* about Madame Tallien and Madame Bonaparte, but the Director's notes on political events as discussed among his colleagues have a great and permanent value. It has been said that the memoirs of both Directors are in the nature of apologies, and it may be added that both of them retained to old age the bitter enmities of their former political life, and that they deliberately set down the most scandalous imputations against the characters of most of their former associates. La Revellière-Lépeaux writes with particular bitterness of Carnot, who in truth had not spared the language of sarcasm and abuse against him in the well-known answer to Bailleul, which was published after the *coup d'état* of 18 Fructidor. No man likes to be called a "tiger" or a "hideous viper," and it is perhaps not unnatural that La Revellière-Lépeaux should have borne a grudge against Carnot to his dying day, and

should have represented the famous "Organizer of Victory" in the worst possible light. To his jaundiced view every act of Carnot was treacherous and mean, and the language used is so strong that it overshoots the mark. La Revellière-Lépeaux himself seems to have felt this, for he writes with regard to his memoirs: "If I have used unmeasured language with regard to Carnot, I desire that it should be softened. I owe it to myself not to imitate his violence." If Carnot roused feelings of bitter hate in the memory of La Revellière-Lépeaux, they were mild in comparison with the rancorous malignity with which Barras regarded Napoleon Bonaparte. As First Consul and as Emperor, the Corsican officer whom Barras had aided to rise to the heights of fame and power, never ceased to persecute his former patron. If indeed an anxiety to leave to posterity a vindication of his political life was one of the aims of Barras in writing his memoirs, an overwhelming desire to blacken the character of Napoleon and to emphasize the baseness of the methods by which he rose to high command, was an equally strong incentive. Napoleon himself, Josephine, and the members of the Bonaparte family are calumniated at every turn; the most disgraceful imputations are made against them all; and if La Revellière-Lépeaux's animosity against Carnot should be carefully discounted, still more care should be used with regard to the reckless mud-throwing of Barras whenever he mentions the man whom it is his brightest title to fame to have brought conspicuously upon the stage of history.

The provisions of the Constitution of the Year III., by the terms of which the Directory came into power on the dissolution of the National Convention in 1795, are sufficiently well known. The chief aim of the Constitutional Committee which had drawn up those provisions and of which it may be noted La Revellière-Lépeaux was himself a leading member, was to establish a strong executive government in France, supreme in all executive matters but deprived of all control over the Legislature. The disastrous effect of the Constitution of 1791 in placing executive power in the hands of a discredited and powerless monarch had been made manifest during the first months of the war of republican France against Europe; France had been saved with difficulty by the arbitrary government of the Committee of Public Safety, and no statesman dreamed in 1795 of leaving the country without a strong executive. But this executive was to be balanced by a legislative authority which it could not control, to which it could not suggest measures, from which it could not select its ministers, and whose

enactments it could not veto. The executive and legislative authorities were as far as possible shut off from each other in separate compartments, and since such an arrangement was politically impracticable, the Constitution of the Year III. was twice violated, first by the Directory interfering unconstitutionally with the Legislature and later by the Legislature interfering unconstitutionally with the Directory, in the course of the four years during which it remained in force. Some of the provisions of the Constitution were the result of previous experience and others seem to have been imitated in part from the American Constitution. The Executive Directory of five members, which was to preserve its solidarity, the decision of the majority being taken as the decision of the whole, was based on the success of the Committee of Public Safety, and it was provided that one Director should retire every year and be ineligible for re-election, in order to prevent the existence of such a corporate despotism as the great Committee of Public Safety. Similarly, to prevent any sudden and sweeping change of policy, such as had resulted from the election of the Legislative Assembly in 1791, it was agreed that one-third of the Legislature should retire yearly. The division of the Legislature into two chambers was a further result of experience. The Constituent Assembly had by a large majority rejected the bi-cameral system in August, 1789, regarding its suggestion as a slavish imitation of the English Houses of Parliament. But the statesmen who drew up the Constitution of the Year III. knew better and divided the new French Legislature into two chambers, — the Council of Ancients and the Council of Five Hundred. To the Council of Ancients was assigned a certain control over foreign affairs and the ratification of treaties, probably in imitation of the functions of the United States Senate, while to the Council of Five Hundred was attributed the right of initiation of all financial measures. Legislation was to be carried by a majority in both chambers and could not be vetoed by the executive authority. Theoretically, the Constitution of the Year III. offered an excellent solution of the dangers and difficulties which beset Revolutionary France, but in practice it was found, as has already been said, that the entire separation of the functions of the executive and legislative was impossible. From both the historical and the political standpoint, the most interesting events in the history of the directorial system of government were the two *coups d'état* of 18 Fructidor, Year V. (September 4, 1797) and of 30 Prairial, Year VII. (June 18, 1799), by which in the first case the Directory violated the Constitution to the prejudice of the Legislature, and in the second case the Legislature retaliated on the Directory. It

will therefore be useful to examine what light is thrown by the memoirs of Barras and of La Revellière-Lépeaux upon these two *coups d'état*. Some idea can be given of the character and value of the memoirs of the two Directors by dealing with their recollections of these two most important events of their political life.

The *coup d'état* of 18 Fructidor was the work particularly of La Revellière-Lépeaux and Barras, and in their memoirs they not only attempt to justify their action, but glorify themselves upon their success. Ever since the election of the new third of the Legislature in the spring of 1797, a strong majority in both Councils had been opposed to the majority of the Executive Directory. The new third represented the feeling of reaction which undoubtedly existed in France in 1797, in spite of the victories of Bonaparte in Italy. The glories of foreign conquest had not materially altered the condition of things at home. France needed peace, and the new third of the Legislature represented this feeling. France, further, desired the punishment, or at least the expulsion from office, of the Terrorists, whose sanguinary methods of government were recollected with a shudder and with fear that they might possibly be resumed. In reaction from the ideas of the Terror, it is possible that perhaps the majority of the middle classes in France would even have welcomed the re-establishment of monarchy. Under these circumstances, the new third of the Legislature, which consisted almost entirely of men who had taken no part in affairs during the Reign of Terror, coalesced with the third which had been elected on the dissolution of the National Convention and had a clear majority over the surviving third of former members of the Convention. Desiring peace, wishing for the overthrow of the men of the Terror, and probably working for the re-establishment of monarchy, the majority of the Legislature, in the spring of 1797, elected to fill the place of Letourneur, on whom the lot had fallen for retirement, Barthélemy, the negotiator of the treatise of Basle and a former marquis and diplomatist during the days of the *ancien régime*. But although the party of peace and reaction had a majority in the Councils, Barthélemy had not the character to win over any two of his colleagues in the Directory, and the party therefore remained in a minority in the executive branch of the government. That a struggle must quickly come was obvious to all observers in the summer of 1797. It was merely a question as to which side would take the initiative in violating the Constitution of the Year III. Both La Revellière-Lépeaux and Barras endeavor to prove that the party of peace and reaction was really working for

the re-establishment of the monarchy, and the former makes a strong point by pointing out that, under the Restoration, it was accounted good service to the Bourbons to have been a victim of the *coup d'état* of Fructidor. Perhaps the only man who sincerely desired to avoid violating the Constitution was Carnot. La Revellière-Lépeaux accuses Carnot of treachery and asserts that he was won over to the party of reaction. This, however, is part of La Revellière-Lépeaux's persistent misrepresentation of Carnot's character. But Carnot gave ground for the accusation in that he threw in his lot with Barthélemy and, with that honest but incompetent old gentleman, refused at the beginning of Fructidor further to attend the meetings of the Directory. In their decision to strike a blow at the leaders of the party of peace and reaction in the Councils, the majority of the Directory, namely, La Revellière-Lépeaux, Barras, and Reubell, had the hearty support of the two most famous generals of the French Republic. Both Hoche and Bonaparte were exceedingly wroth at the language used in Councils about the French armies, both disliked the idea of peace, and both prepared to come to the assistance of the majority of the Directory. Hoche indeed went so far, at the invitation of Barras, as to march some of his troops towards Paris, and La Revellière-Lépeaux gives an interesting account of an interview which took place between the Directors and Hoche, in which Barras roused the young general's indignation by refusing to acknowledge the invitation he had given him (*Mémoires*, Vol. II., pp. 421-425). Bonaparte did not himself come to Paris, but he caused the circulation in his army of violent diatribes against the peace party, even going so far as to falsify the *Moniteur* (see Thiébault, *Mémoires*, Vol. II., p. 123), and he sent one of his most trusted generals, Augereau, to carry out the military part of the programme planned by the majority of the Directory. As the day fixed for the *coup d'état* approached, Reubell, by the testimony of both his colleagues, was overcome with fear, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could be prevented from running away from his rooms in the palace of the Luxembourg. Barras charitably puts down Reubell's fears to a fit of temporary insanity; La Revellière-Lépeaux does not go quite so far, but he fully justifies Barras's remarks and asserts that his own coolness restored Reubell's courage. La Revellière-Lépeaux, as President of the Directory for the time being, signed first the orders that were given, while Barras dealt with Augereau and arranged the execution of the measures that were taken. La Revellière-Lépeaux takes to himself the credit of being the man who really brought

about the *coup d'état* of 18 Fructidor, because he managed to maintain harmony between Barras and Reubell, who cordially disliked each other, and, as has already been said, he glories in his actions at that time of crisis, believing that his policy alone prevented the restoration of monarchy and the progress of reaction in France. Barras, on the other hand, prides himself on having been the man who actually carried out the *coup d'état* and asserts that, after it was over, Augereau desired him to usurp sovereign power by expelling his colleagues (*Memoirs*, Vol. III., p. 27), and that Talleyrand advised the instant execution of the defeated leaders of the peace party (p. 28) and said that he himself would like a place in the Directory (p. 30). Both La Revellière-Lépeaux and Barras point with pride to the fact that no blood was shed during the *coup d'état* of 18 Fructidor. Carnot was allowed to escape to Germany, while Barthélemy, with Pichegru and the other leaders of the Council, were deported to French Guiana. But both the victorious Directors forget to notice that the deportation of these men to South America was almost tantamount to a sentence of death, owing to the nature of the climate of Cayenne and Sinnamari. Barras, further, says nothing of the sudden revival of the cruel laws against returned émigrés, while La Revellière-Lépeaux declares that this revival of severity had nothing to do with the *coup d'état* of Fructidor, but was merely the application of the law still existing. This, however, is a mere quibble; for it is an undoubted fact that whereas during the first two years of the Directory the return of many émigrés was allowed without putting the law in force against them, after the 18 Fructidor numerous executions of returned émigrés took place. Upon this subject, as well as upon the history of the *coup d'état* of 18 Fructidor generally, the statements of Barras and La Revellière-Lépeaux should be carefully checked by the valuable work of M. Victor Pierre, entitled *La Terreur sous le Directoire*, and by the still more valuable collection of documents edited by the same scholar for the Société d'Histoire Contemporaine in 1893.

The *coup d'état* of 30 Prairial, Year VII., naturally fills a much smaller place in the memoirs of Barras than in those of La Revellière-Lépeaux; for while the former was one of the victors, to his own eventual ruin, the latter's political life was then brought to an end. In May, 1799, Reubell, whom both his former colleagues unite in praising as the ablest man who ever served in the Directory, — excepting, of course, themselves, — had retired, and Sieyès, who had indeed been chosen a member of the original Directory but had refused to take his seat owing to the presence of his

personal enemy Reubell, now took his place. Once again, as in 1797, the majority of the Councils was directly opposed to the majority of the Directory. The military situation had greatly changed since the time of the *coup d'état* of Fructidor. At that time, the French armies were at the height of their fame, Bonaparte was master of Italy, and the Austrians had been compelled to sue for peace; but in 1799, Bonaparte was shut up in Egypt, the French had been driven from Italy by the Russians under Suvorov, and only Masséna's brilliant campaign in Switzerland saved France from invasion. The leaders in the Councils attributed this change for the worse to the action of the Directors, and Sieyès took his seat in the Directory with the intention of representing the same views in the heart of the government. Sieyès was a far abler politician than Barthélemy, and he at once set to work to build up a majority in the Directory itself. This was speedily done. It was pointed out that Treilhard, one of the Directors, had no right to his position, owing to his having been elected within a year from his resignation from the Legislature. The Councils, therefore, declared him unconstitutionally elected, and his colleagues in the Directory forced him to resign. His place was taken by Gohier, who, like Sieyès, represented the views of the Councils, and the two had no difficulty in bringing Barras over to their side and thus constituting a majority in the Directory. This accomplished, the leaders in the Councils vehemently attacked La Revellière-Lépeaux and Merlin of Douai, the remaining Directors, and demanded their resignations. Such a demand was utterly unconstitutional, and that it succeeded was a further proof of the impracticable nature of the Constitution of the Year III. The two accused Directors naturally declined to resign, and a struggle seemed to be impending. Impressed with this idea, the majority of the Directory appointed Joubert to the command of Paris as Augereau had been appointed in 1797, and prepared to use force. Barras briefly, and La Revellière-Lépeaux at greater length, describes the events of 30 Prairial. A stormy meeting of the Directors was held; Barras came armed to the meeting and violently abused Merlin of Douai. Seeing that the majority of their colleagues, as well as the majority of the Councils, were against them, the two accused Directors sent in their resignations and thus the second *coup d'état* of the government of the Directory was accomplished. Barras can hardly be said, even in the light of his own memoirs, to have played a creditable part in the *coup d'état* of 30 Prairial. He was at least as guilty as his colleagues of the disasters which had befallen the armies, and his

being spared was due to the fact that he could be more easily won over to the side of Sieyès and the Councils than men of more determined character like Merlin and La Revellière-Lépeaux. It is also worth noting with Barras that the *coup d'état* of Prairial was not followed by the punishment of the defeated. "The early 'days' of the Revolution are signalized," says Barras (*Memoirs*, Vol. III., p. 430), "up to 13 Vendémiaire by the death of the vanquished. On the 18 Fructidor, transportation only was resorted to. On this occasion, dismissals were considered sufficient. This series of amendments to the early ferocity truly bears a resemblance to a progress of civilization. It is no longer permissible to kill one's enemies nor even to transport them; all that is possible is to dismiss them and put others in their place."

The details of the *coup d'état* of 18 Brumaire, Year VIII. (November 9, 1789), which put an end to the government of the Directory, are much better known than the circumstances surrounding the *coups d'état* of 18 Fructidor and 30 Prairial, since it was then that Napoleon Bonaparte seized the government of France, and all his biographers have narrowly examined all sources of information. The memoirs of La Revellière-Lépeaux naturally throw no new light upon the 18 Brumaire, since the author was then living in retirement, but Barras gives a long account of his own doings and feelings during that memorable time. His prejudice against Napoleon, however, is as conspicuous as usual, and vitiates the authenticity of the numerous anecdotes which he tells about himself and his friends and their relations to the victorious general.

One point which stands out in the memoirs of both the ex-Directors is that Reubell was by far the ablest member that ever sat at the board of the Directory. Neither La Revellière-Lépeaux nor Barras, by the testimony of all contemporary observers, liked Reubell, but they both do him full justice in the sketches they give of his character and conduct. La Revellière-Lépeaux devotes some pages to a portrait of Reubell (Vol. I., pp. 332-337), in which he declares that his colleague had bad manners and was obstinate rather than firm, but he adds that these bad qualities were balanced by great talents. He protests against the common accusation that Reubell was avaricious and made a large fortune by corrupt means, and says to his credit: "Few men have been better fitted to govern by their natural intelligence and knowledge of affairs. . . . He had a wonderful memory and it was hardly possible to mention to him any man with whose history he was not thoroughly acquainted, which often enabled us to see through intrigues and intriguers. . . .

He never to my knowledge betrayed his party or broke his word. . . . He sincerely loved liberty and was so proud of the honor of France and so attached to the interests of the Republic, that he was sometimes harsh and unjust with regard to other nations. At home he was the best of husbands and of fathers." Barras on more than one occasion speaks of Reubell in equally strong terms of praise, but perhaps the most remarkable testimony that the vainglorious nobleman gives to the merits of the Alsatian lawyer is contained in the following words: "It was Reubell who was the soul of the Directory. It was he who from the very first day had made it adopt the vigorous course which had obtained for us so many results at home and abroad — results which had won us the respect of Europe." (*Memoirs*, Vol. III., p. 399.)

It was often alleged by contemporaries, and has since been generally accepted by historians, that the government of the Directory shamefully neglected the interests of the soldiers, who under the command of Bonaparte had conquered Italy, and was responsible alike for the excesses of the armies in 1798 and for the loss of Italy in 1799. It need hardly be said that both La Revellière-Lépeaux and Barras endeavor in their memoirs to clear themselves from these accusations. The former even goes to the length of directing some hundreds of pages of correspondence with himself on Italian affairs to be printed in the *pièces justificatives* subjoined to his memoirs. But it is made perfectly evident throughout that La Revellière-Lépeaux was entirely hoodwinked by the civilian commissioners whom the Directory despatched to Italy in the wake of the conquering armies. Very different evidence on this subject is given by the memoirs of Baron Thiébault. This distinguished officer, whose tales of war and glory are, in brilliancy of style and vivid interest, second only to the famous memoirs of Marbot, devotes the greater part of his second volume to his adventures and experiences in Italy. Thiébault was on the spot; he had good reason to remember accurately the campaigns in Italy in which he won his way to the higher ranks of the military service; and his record bears internal evidence of its truthfulness. Thiébault states and repeats in convincing language that the disgraceful pillage and peculation which marked the conduct of the French in Italy in 1798 was due to these very civilian commissioners whom La Revellière-Lépeaux praises as models of probity and disinterested fidelity to duty. Thiébault further takes the side of Championnet, the conqueror of Naples, as against MacDonald, who supplanted him in command, while La Revellière-Lépeaux takes a diametrically opposite view of the conduct of the

two generals. Perhaps no part of Thiébault's memoirs is of such historical value as the volume in which he deals with his experiences in Italy during the government of the Directory. There has streamed forth from the great publishing houses of Paris, ever since the startling success of Marbot's memoirs, a flood of recollections of old soldiers who took part in the wars of Napoleon, but in most cases they held very subordinate ranks in the days of the Directory, and deal at much greater length with the events of the Empire. Thiébault, however, goes into minute details about the French armies of the former epoch and proves conclusively that however well the Directors might have intended to maintain discipline and good order, those qualities were conspicuously lacking among the troops that conquered Italy. The story of the insubordinate conduct shown towards Masséna at Rome, the bitter jealousies of rival generals, the favoritism which promoted the incompetent, and the want of discipline among the rank and file are sketched by Thiébault in masterly style. It is necessary to supplement the account of the triumphs and defeats of the French armies between 1795 and 1799, given from the government point of view in the pages of the Directors, by such honest narratives from the point of view of the soldiers themselves as that given in the second volume of the memoirs of General Paul Thiébault.

Different in style and character to the memoirs of Thiébault, who was a man of letters and the son of a man of letters, are the rough notes thrown together by General Roch Godart, the son of a cooper at Arras, whom the events of the Revolution had placed in command of the 79th Regiment. These rough notes have been most carefully edited by M. J. B. Antoine, and the three chapters dealing with the period of the Directory confirm the narrative of Thiébault with regard to the campaign of 1798 in Italy, and the attitude of the army towards the Directors. The most interesting page of Godart's memoirs, however, deals in simple fashion with the *coup d'état* of 18 Brumaire. The 79th played a most important part at that time, but its worthy colonel goes into no elaborate details. He had arrived in Paris with his soldiers about a month before the *coup d'état*, and he writes: "The Deputy Aréna and his partisans wished to frustrate the projects of our general-in-chief. They caused many offers of money and promotion to be made to me, which I spurned. I had no desire to implicate myself in any political movement; I regarded only my general's commands, and I had further no reason to betray the general-in-chief Bonaparte, in whom I had the greatest confidence." (*Mémoires*, p. 75.)

It may be stated in conclusion, as must have been made evi-

dent in the preceding pages, that a great deal of additional light has, during the last year, been thrown upon the history of the Directory by the publication of such collections of memoirs as those of La Revellière-Lépeaux, Barras, Thiébault, and Godart. Although it has been insisted upon that personal recollections must always be examined with the greatest care, and treated only as illustrative and secondary material for history, yet the historical student cannot afford to neglect entirely any piece of new evidence laid before him, even if it be the garrulous and vainglorious gossip of two old men writing apologies for their political careers twenty years after those careers had closed, like Barras and La Revellière-Lépeaux.

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